

FIREBUGS ZUCKER AND SCHOENHOLZ'S SUCCESSFUL CONSPIRACY.



SCHOENHOLZ MEETS ZUCKER

THEY FIX THE COMBUSTIBLES

WATCHES THE FIRE FROM THE STREET

SERVING 48 YEARS IN SING-SING

ZUCKER, manufacturer of cloaks, 1981 owned the building at No. 294 Division street and lived on the second floor. Max Blum, a jobber in g, lived on the second floor of No.

They were talking of business one stifling August afternoon in Blum's apartments when Morris Schoenholz, an expressman, carrying bundles of clothing for which he had been sent by Blum, entered.

"May I meet death to-night if I ever saw business so low," said Zucker. "I am sorry ruined, and to-day comes the man on the Board of Health who says my house is to be condemned because it is so old and so dirty. He will ruin me and will care."

"Don't you burn it down?" Schoenholz asked.

"I could be good to do, for the insurance is big," Blum added softly. Presently their heads were close together, and in the darkness language of the ghetto they

planned a crime.

"When?" asked Schoenholz.

"Let us say after the holidays," suggested Zucker.

The holidays—that month of fasts and feasts, of purifications for the body, of Scripture readings and of prayers for the restoration of Jerusalem—is not a season in which to sell the soul, so the conspirators waited, bathed and prayed until the new year—the season for business—was come. But while they waited they had not ceased to plan.

Zucker explained thoroughly what he wanted the experts in arson to accomplish. Finally they decided upon a plan that seemed to promise success. They put it into execution. They prepared the combustibles. They made the attempt. The attempt failed, and Zucker, enraged and rallied at the blunders, as he called his co-conspirators.

When he calmed down they agreed that the virtue of perseverance should be theirs

and they held another conference.

"We must have a shop on the first floor of my house," Zucker said, and he put a stock of cloaks in there and set a man he for the door to cry the goods. An insurance agent inspected the shop and wrote a policy on it. Another agent insured Blum's furniture.

The Fall trade was good, and Zucker was busy. His cloak shop was a profitable investment. He delayed the fire. While he delayed, Schoenholz set a blaze in Eighth avenue, and he had an appointment to set another in Brooklyn when business began to decline. Word came to Zucker that he was regarded with suspicion in insurance circles, and he called the conspirators together and counseled early action.

"First," said Schoenholz, "you must get the valuable goods out. Then we will some night light beneath the gas meter a fire so hot that the meter will burst, gas escape and a great flame sweep through the house, destroying everything."

The face of Blum, also a firebug of experience, glowed in appreciation of the

"A fire of benzine under the gas meter is as certain as a man's love of money," said Blum.

Zucker is a cautious man. That is why he is rich. "It is a good plan," he said. "We will do as you say. But the gas meter is in front in the cellar. We must have it moved to the rear, on the first floor. We will build a cage of pine for it. The pine will burn quickly and carry the flame to the wood of the floors."

Not until Christmas week was the work plotted in August undertaken. A carpenter moved the gas meter from the cellar of Zucker's place into the store. There was an alleyway behind shelving, where the meter was placed, and about it the carpenter constructed a box large enough to contain fifty meters. He made a bench also and left it beneath the meter, that one might mount and read the dials as the gas was consumed. The third day of the carpenter's work was January 3, 1892.

Schoenholz carried many bundles from Zucker's shop to Newark—so many that had not Zucker kept the shop curtains down, neighbors would have seen there was no stock left. The insurance agent grew more suspicious, and would have cancelled the policy, but he fell ill. Schoenholz conveyed some furniture from Division street to East Seventy-third street, where Mrs.

Zucker received it, and the last load was delivered on January 2, 1892.

The conspirators met in Blum's rooms the next day. Mrs. Blum was away from home. The carpenter found them there in earnest talk. "I have finished," he said. Zucker paid him. "Get me some benzine to clean my cloaks," he said, and sent the carpenter for twenty gallons of the volatile fluid.

The carpenter made four trips and each time fetched five gallons. Blum emptied the benzine into a tub resting on the bench beneath the meter. Fifteen gallons filled the tub.

"What shall we do with this?" asked Blum, when the last five gallons arrived.

"Save it to scatter about at night before the fire is started," said Zucker. He was an amateur at fire-making, and the professional, Schoenholz, laughed. They emptied the last bottleful into a barrel and sent the carpenter away.

"Now for the trap," said Schoenholz, and the three went back to Blum's rooms. Zucker, with a meat cleaver, entered a closet in a bedroom and cut a hole through the plaster and lath wall that separated this closet from the rear room of Zucker's apartment over the store.

"Now we must have a piece of light cloth to connect our trap with the benzine,"

Blum said. He procured it and passed an end through the hole and attached the other end to a chair that he placed in the closet.

"Do you stay here, Zucker, while we go into your house, and you pass the line through to us," he told his accomplice.

Schoenholz and Blum hurried to Zucker's apartment. Beneath the hole Blum had chopped through the divisional wall, Schoenholz cut a hole through the door, and the chips fell into the tub of benzine. Zucker passed the cloth rope through to the men, who passed it down through the door until an end dipped into the benzine.

When all three were again gathered in the closet, Blum fetched a candle in a cake of soap that he placed upon the chair.

Schoenholz had fetched a large cigar box and an earthen bowl with a handle. He placed the box on the chair back of the candle. From Mrs. Blum's oil can he poured kerosene into that bowl and set it upon the cigar box, tied a string to the bowl's handle and carried the string out into the hall.

"The trap is set!" said Blum triumphantly.

"Will it work?" asked Zucker, doubtfully.

"Will you pick up a diamond if it lies in the gutter?" answered Blum.

At 8 o'clock at night Schoenholz lighted

the candle. The Blums and Zuckers were in their room. He slipped into the hall and pulled the string that was tied to the bowl of oil. An answering tug from the other end told him he had overthrown the bowl. A red glare seen through the key-hole told him the candle had set fire to the overturned oil. He went downstairs and on to the corner of Montgomery street, where he waited for the mounting flames.

The fire flashed down the rope to the tub of benzine, that ignited with a roar. In an instant the gas meter was a melting scrap of metal. Gas poured from the wide lead pipe, caught fire, and in a great spout of flame melted the lead and blew away the pine cage and shelving. Even the dirt-crusted walls took fire, and before the alarm had been given the two buildings were beyond saving.

Firemen fought as firemen will fight, and kept the fire confined to the two buildings. They saved nothing for the insurers of Zucker or Blum. Zucker calmly watched the fire from the street.

Before midnight the fire was burned out. The conspirators' plans had succeeded to the last letter. But the moral of this tale is not the victory of craft, for Zucker is on trial for arson and Schoenholz is under sentence of forty-eight years' imprisonment.

SCHOENHOLZ'S STORY.

Confesses to Setting Fire to Six Tenements Filled with Helpless Tenants.

Forty-eight years of prison life ahead of him—a term that will keep him, if he behind iron bars till he is ninety-four—old—Morris Schoenholz had nothing to concealment when Lawyer Howe cross-examined him as a witness in the arson trial. He as impressively

told of starting fires as if arson were a commonplace misdemeanor. He said he had set fire to a tenement house in Brooklyn in 1880 or 1890; another in Eighth avenue a year later; a third in Fourth avenue, Brooklyn, in 1891, and Zucker's, in Division street.

"Have you forgotten the one at Great Jones street and Broadway?" Mr. Howe asked him.

"Oh, yes," he replied; "there was that one, too."

"How many altogether?"

"I should say about six."

"And all these fires," said Mr. Howe, "have been in tenements, where helpless women and little children lived."

The convict smiled leeringly and answered affirmatively.

After the cross-examination Schoenholz was excused, and he started back to the prison that he will probably never leave alive.

Philip Meyer, a pocketbook maker at No. 729 Broadway, testified that he had seen the wooden partition, tubs and burning candle in Zucker's house before the fire. Captain Joseph Morse of Truck No. 19, testified that he noticed after the fire that the floor was covered with oil.

Max Blum, an alleged confederate of Zucker, was arrested at the door of the court room yesterday and held for higher bail. He was out on \$5,000 surety. It

was said he had been trying to talk with witnesses.

GUARDING THE FIRM'S BOOKS

Creditors Contribute to Retain the Accounts of Lichtenstein & Sons.

The books and papers of the late firm of J. Lichtenstein & Sons, dealers in dry goods, formerly at Nos. 64 and 66 West Twenty-third street, who failed two years ago, have recently become an interesting subject to the creditors. When Carl Caillinau was appointed receiver for the firm the books were

turned over to him and he placed them in a storage warehouse for safe keeping, where they have been for a long time. There are 221 in all, and the storage charges now amount to \$208.

Herman Joseph, in behalf of the receiver, applied to Judge Coolan, of the City Court, for permission to sell the books and papers and pay the storage charges. It was feared that a combination might buy the books to prevent them from getting into the hands of creditors who have suits against the firm any evidence that might be of use in suits. An arrangement was made on Thursday between the various interests not to have the sale, and Judge Coolan has ordered the payment of the storage charges. \$208.

and all the creditors who are interested in having the books preserved are to chip in and pay the amount.

In the meantime the books are placed in charge of the Southern National Bank, to be kept for the benefit of those creditors who have suits now pending in equity in the Supreme Court.

FAGAN FOUND GUILTY.

Principal Witness Against the Counterfeiter Was the Wife of One of His Friends.

Thomas Scott Fagan, who has been on trial for the last three days for counter-

feiting, was found guilty yesterday and remanded for sentence. The principal witness against him was Mrs. Lottie Knapp,

the concert hall singer, who is the wife of one of the band of counterfeiters to which Fagan was said to belong. Her husband has been convicted and is now awaiting sentence. The jury rendered a verdict of guilty after a deliberation of fifteen minutes.

The Knapp woman, who had been in custody merely as a witness, was discharged on the recommendation of Assistant District-Attorney Blumman.

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